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NARRATIVE

OF THE

PORTUGUESE EMBASSY

TO

ABYSSINIA

DURING THE YEARS 1520-1527.

BY

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TRANSLATED FROM THE PORTUGUESE,

AND EDITED,

With Notes and an Introduction,

BY

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[pp. 1-20 have not been processed for the files.-Analyst]

CAP. XI.—*Of the fashion and situation of the monasteries and their customs, first this of St. Michael.*

346 The manner of these monasteries as to their sites and
361 customs: all are situated on the greatest and highest cliffs, or the deepest they can find. This one of St. Michael is situated on a very steep rock at the foot of another very high rock, where no one can ascend. The stone of which these rocks consist is of the grain of the walls of the port of Portugal.[1] They are very great rocks. The land around
137 these rocks is all covered with very great forests, and besides wild olive trees and high grass between them, in which there is much basil. The trees which are not wild olive trees are not trees known to us; all are without fruit. In the narrow valleys which belong to this monastery there are orange trees, lemon trees, citron trees, pear trees and fig trees of all kinds, both of Portugal and India; peach trees, cabbages, coriander, cardamine, wormwood,[2] myrtle and
461 other sweet-smelling and medicinal herbs, all ill profited by because they are not good working men: and the earth produces these like wild plants, and it would produce whatever was planted and sown in it. The monastery house
346 looks quite like a church building, constructed like ours. It has around it a circuit like a cloister, covered above in the same manner as the body of the monastery. It has three entrances, as ours are, one principal one, and two side ones. The roof of the church and of its cloisters is of wild straw, which lasts a man's life: the body of the church is built with naves very well constructed, and their arches are

[1] Ogato. [p.21] [2] Alosna.

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346 very well closed; all appears to be vaulted. The church has a chancel and a transept, in the centre transept are curtains from end to end; and there are other curtains before the side doors, from wall to wall. They are curtains of silk: the entrance through these curtains is in three places, they are open in the middle, and they reach one to another, also they can be entered close to the walls. In the said three entrances there are little bells suspended to the curtains themselves, and nobody can enter by any part without these bells ringing. Here there is not more than one altar, which is in the chancel: this has a stand on four props, and the altar reaches to these four props. This stand is covered over above as though with a vault, and there is an altar stone which they call *tabuto*. Upon this altar stone there is a basin of copper, very large and flat below, and with low sides. This basin also reaches to the supports of the stand, which are disposed in a square. Within this large basin there is another smaller one. This stand has curtains hanging down from it to the ground, that is, at the back and sides, which screen the altar, except that in front it is open. One can go all round the altar. The bells are of
534 stone, and in this manner: long thin stones, suspended by cords passed through them, and they strike them with sticks made for the purpose, and they make a sound as of cracked bells heard at a distance. Also at festivals they take the basins from the altar and strike them with sticks, and they help to make a sound. They have also other iron bells, not round, but with two sides, they have a clapper which strikes first on one side and then on the other, and it makes a noise as of helving a mattock. They also have other small ill-made bells, which they carry in their hands at processions, and they ring the whole of them at the festivals. On other days the bells of stones and iron are
782 used. In all churches and monasteries they ring for matins
796 two hours before dawn. They say the prayers by heart and

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They say the prayers by heart and
without light, except in the lamps or chandeliers, for they 796 782
have not got lamps. They burn butter in these chandeliers, [373]
for they have not got oil. They pray or chaunt very loud, [354]
without art of singing, and they do not recite (alternate) [237]
verses, but all sing straight on. Their prayers are psalms, and
on feast days besides psalms they recite prose, according as [533]
the feast is so is the prose. They always stand in the
churches; at matins they only say one single lesson: this
is said by a priest or a friar, rather shouted than intoned,
and he reads this lesson before the principal entrance.
When this lesson is finished, on Saturdays, Sundays, and 792
feast days, they make a procession with four or five crosses 796
on their poles, and a cross not so much raised as carried
like a stick in the left hand, because they carry a thurible
in the right hand, since as many as carry a cross carry a
thurible, there are always as many thuribles as crosses.
They wear some silk cloaks, not well made, because they [292]
are not wider than the width of a piece of damask, or other
silk from top to bottom. Before the breast, a cross piece to
the flanks on each side, of any other stuff and of any colour,
even though it should not match the principal part, and of
this principal part a good ell hangs behind dragging on the
ground. They make this procession through the circuit,
which is like a cloister. This being ended, on the said
Saturdays, Sundays, and feasts, he who has to say mass
enters with two others into the chancel; they bring out an [778]
effigy of Our Lady, which they have in ancient pictures in all
churches and monasteries. He who has to say mass places
himself in the centre of the transept with his face towards
the principal entrance, and the image in his hands held
before his breast: and those who stand by his sides hold
lighted candles in their hands, and all the others commence
a chaunt like prose, and all walk, shouting and leaping as if
dancing[1], they hold hands and go round, before the

[1] *Como em chacota*, dancing and singing, *i.e.*, not reverentially.

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image,[1] and at the sound of that chaunt or prose which they sing, they also ring the little bells and sound the cymbals to the same tune. Each time that they pass before the image they make a great reverence to it. Certainly it has a good appearance and causes devotion, from being a thing done for the praise of the Lord God. There also proceed crosses and thuribles in this feast as in the procession. When this is ended, which lasts a good while, they put by the picture and go to a small building which is on the North side, and of the gospel according to our mass; and outside the covered circuit, where they make the bread which they call *corbom*, and we *hostia*. They carry cross, thurible, and bell, and bring thence the bread of wheat flour, and without leaven, made at that moment, very white and nice, of the size and roundness of a patena, in this monastery in which are few people. In other monasteries and churches, where there are many people, they make large loaves, and many of them according to the people, because all are communicants who go to the church. According to the width of the bread they make its thickness, from half a finger's breadth to an inch, or larger. They bring this loaf in a small vase, which is one of those of the altar, covered with a cloth, and with the cross and thurible, sounding a bell. Behind the church, that is, behind the chancel,[2] in that circuit which is like a cloister, nobody must remain unless he were in holy orders, and all the others must be before the principal entrance in another large circuit, which all the churches have; for near this, which is like a cloister, anybody who likes may stand. Whilst bringing the bread, as many as are in the church or in its circuit, when they hear the bell, bow their heads until the bell is silent, which is when they place the wafer on the altar with the small vase in which they brought

[1] *Como quem ànda per mãos diante da imagem.* According to the Spanish translation of Miguel de Salves. Saragossa, 1561.

[2] *Oussia.*

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it. They place this vase in the other larger one, and cover the bread with a dark cloth, after the fashion of a *corporale*. They have a silver chalice in this monastery, and so in all honourable churches and monasteries there are silver chalices, some have them of gold: in poor churches, which they call churches of *Balgues*, that is, of rustics, there are copper chalices. The vases are very wide and ill made, and they have not got patenas. They put into the chalice wine of raisins, in large quantities, because as many as partake of the communion of the body also partake of the blood. He who has to say mass begins it with Hallelujah in a loud voice, rather shouted than sung; all respond and continue the chaunt. He of the mass is silent and continues his benedictions, which he does with his small cross, which he holds in his hand. Those who are outside sing as well as those who are inside the church and cloister, up to a certain distance. Here one of those who is at the altar, takes a book and goes to read the epistle at the principal door of the church. When it is ended, he who read it at once begins a chaunt as a response; those who are at the altar, or in the church, follow him. This ended, he who says the mass takes a book from the altar, and gives it to him who has to read the gospel, and he bows his head and begs a blessing. After he has received it he goes to the place where the epistle was read, and with him two others, one with a cross and thurible, the other with a bell. They read the gospel, and likewise the epistle, fast and loud, as much so as the tongue can speak and the voice be raised. Returning to the altar, on the way another chaunt commences, and those that accompany them join in it. On reaching the altar they give the book to kiss to him who says the mass, and they deposit the book in its place; because at the altar they say nothing from a book. Then he who says mass takes the thurible, or they give it into his hand, and he incenses the altar above it, and then takes

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796 several turns round it, giving incense. When these circuits
782 and incensing are ended, he turns to the altar and gives many blessings with the cross, and then uncovers the bread which was covered up, and which is for the sacrament: they take it with both hands, and let go the right hand and it remains in the left hand: with the thumb of the right hand he makes five marks like little hollows, that is to say, one in the upper part, one in the middle, another at the lower part, another on the left, and another on the right hand, and then he consecrates in his language, and with our own very words, and does not elevate it. He does as much with the chalice, and says over it our own very words, in his language: and again covers it, and takes the sacrament of the bread in his hands and divides it in the middle, and of the part which remains in his left hand, from the top of it he takes a very small portion, and places the other pieces one upon another. The priest takes this small portion for himself, and also takes a portion of the sacrament of the blood. After that he takes the vase with the sacrament covered up and gives it to him who read the gospel, and likewise takes the chalice with the sacrament and gives it to him who read the epistle. He then administers the communion to the priests who are near the altar, taking the sacrament in very small portions from the vase which the deacon holds in his right hand, and as often as he administers it the sub-deacon takes of the blood with a spoon of gold, or silver, or copper, according to the church, and gives a very small quantity to the person who has received the body. There is also on one side another priest with a ewer of holy water, and the person who has received the communion puts out the palm of his hand and he pours some of that holy water, and with it he washes his mouth and swallows it. This being done all go to the altar with this sacrament before the first curtain, and in this manner they give the communion to those that are there, and thence to

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those who are at the other curtain, and thence to the 796
secular people who are at the principal door, both men and 782
women, if it is a church to which women come. At the giving of the communion, and likewise at all the offices of the church, all are standing up. When they come to receive the communion, all come with their hands raised before their shoulders, and the palms forward. As soon as each one receives the sacrament of the blood he takes the said water as has been said, and so generally as many as are communicants. Before mass they wash their hands with the water which is in all the churches and monasteries. The priest who said the mass, and those who stood with him at the altar, when the communion is ended, return to the altar, and wash the vase in which the sacrament was, with the water which remains in the ewer, which they say is blessed, this water they pour into the chalice, and the priest who said mass takes it all. This done, one of these ministers of the altar takes a cross and a bell, and beginning a low chaunt goes to the principal entrance, where the epistle and gospel were read, and the administering the communion ended, and as many as are in the church, and outside of it, bow their heads, and go away in peace. They say this is the blessing, without this no one goes away. On Saturdays and Sundays, and feast days, in all the churches and monasteries, blessed bread is distributed. The method which they have in this small monastery, which will not [192] have more than 20 or 25 friars, is that which is followed in all the monasteries and churches, great and small. The office of the mass, exclusive of the processions, is short; and the mass on week days is quickly finished.

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CAP. XII.—*Where and how the bread of the Sacrament is made, and of a Procession they made, and of the pomp with which the mass is said, and of entering into the church.*

782 252 [346] The making of this sacramental bread is in this manner. The building in which it is made, in all churches and monasteries, is, as I said above, on the gospel side, outside of the church and its circuit, which is like a cloister, in the space contained by the other outer circuit, which is not covered in, which space serves for a churchyard. All the churches and monasteries have such a building, and it does not contain anything else except what is requisite for this purpose; that is to say, a mortar for pounding wheat, a machine for making very clean flour, and such as is required for such a purpose, for they do not prepare this sacrament from flour or wheat on which women have laid their hands. They have pots for preparing the paste, which they make thicker than ours. They have a furnace, as for distilling water, and upon it a plate of iron, and in some churches of copper, and in other poor churches of clay. This plate is round and of a good size; they place fire underneath it, and when it is hot clean it with a waxed cloth, pour on it a portion of paste, and spread it out with a wooden spoon of such size as they intend to make the bread, and they make it very round. When it is set they take it off and place it on end, then they make another in the same way. When this second one is set, they take the first and place it upon it, that is to say, the side of the first which was uppermost they put upon the top of the other, fresh with fresh, and so the bread remains one whole one, and they do nothing more than make it round and turn it from one side to the other, and move it about on the plate, that it may bake on both sides and on the circumference. In this manner they make one or as many as they wish. In this same [273] house are the raisins from which the wine is made, and a machine for pressing.

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house are the raisins from which the wine is made, and a machine for pressing. In this same house the blessed bread is made which is given away on Saturdays and Sundays and feast days; and on great feasts, such as Christmas, Easter, Our Lady of August, etc., they carry this bread of the sacrament with a pallium,[1] bell, and cross devoutly. Before they enter the church with it they go round the church by the circuit like a cloister; when it is not a feast they enter the church at once and without the pallium. On a Saturday before Ascension these friars made a procession; and from being in a new country it seemed to us very good, and they did it in this way. They took crosses, and the altar stone covered with a silk cloth, a friar carried it on his head, which was also covered with the said cloths; and they carried books and bells, and thuribles, and holy water; and all went chaunting to some millet fields: there they made their devotions and cries after the fashion of litanies, and with this procession they returned to the monastery. We asked why they did that, and they said that the animals ate their millet, and so they went to pour out holy water and pray God to drive them out. In this country he that says the mass has no other difference from the deacon and sub-deacon in his vestments than a long stole with an opening in the middle to allow the head to pass through; before and behind it reaches to the ground. The friars say mass with hair on their heads; the priests do not wear hair, and are shaven and so say mass. Also, both friars and priests say mass barefooted, nobody enters the church with his feet shod, and they allege for this what God said to Moses: "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for thou art on holy ground."

782 796 793 292 796 [302]

[1] Under a canopy.

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CAP. XIII.—*How in all the churches and monasteries in the country of Prester John only one mass is said each day; and of the situation of the monastery of Bisam where we buried Matthæus; and of the fast of Lent.*

796 In the monastery of St. Michael, where we were staying, we said mass each day, not in the monastery, but in the circuit which is like a cloister. In this country they do not say more than one mass in each church or monastery. The friars came to our mass with great devotion, as it appeared; and they supplied a thurible and incense, because we had not brought any with us, and they do not think mass is properly said without incense; and they said that they approved of all, except that we had only one priest to say mass; because among them not less than three, five, or or seven stand at the altar to say mass. They also were surprised at our coming into the church with our shoes on, and still more at our spitting in it. In this manner we said 796 mass every day up to Trinity Sunday, and when we in- 784 tended to say mass on the following Monday they did not allow us to say it, at which we were much scandalised and aggrieved, and it seemed to us that they had some evil suspicion of us, not knowing why they so acted. Later we learned how they preserved some things of the Old Law together with the New; such as that of the fast of Lent, which they began on Monday after Sexagesima Sunday, that is, ten days before the beginning of our Lent; and so they make fifty days of Lent. They say they take these days in anticipation for the Saturdays when they do not keep the fast. When they fast they eat at night, and because all fast they say mass at night, because all have to take the communion. Likewise, as they take fifty days' fast in Lent, so they take as many days after Easter which are not fast days. Then, when there is no fast, they say mass in the morning. This secret we did not know, and

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we had no one to explain it to us: as soon as their liberty not to fast had ended, their mass could not be said, except at night, and so they did not consent to our saying it; thus we felt aggrieved without cause. This time having ended and Trinity passed by, all priests and friars are obliged to fast every day except Saturdays and Sundays. They keep this fast up to Christmas Day, and as all fast they say mass at night. They allege for this the supper of Christ, when He consecrated His true Body, having been a fast time, and almost night. The general people, that is secular men and women, are obliged to fast from Trinity to Advent, Wednesdays and Fridays of each week, and from Christmas day to the Purification of Our Lady, which they call the feast of Simeon,[1] they have no fast. The first three days after the Purification, not being Saturday or Sunday, are great fast days for priests, friars, and laymen. They say that in these three days they do not eat more than once: it is called the penitence of Niniveh. At the end of these three days, up to the beginning of Lent, they again fast as from after Trinity. During Advent and the whole of Lent, priests, friars, lay friars, men and women, small and great, sound and sick, all fast. Thus from Easter to Trinity, and from Christmas to the Purification, they say mass in the morning, because there is no fast, and all the other time at night, because they are fasting. Where we buried Matthews is a great and honourable monastery, which is named Bisam, and its patron, Jesus. From the monastery where we stayed to this is a league of very precipitous country. It is on a very high rock, and looking round all sides of it there appear like the depths of hell. The monastery house is very large in bulk, and larger in revenues, and this monastery is very well fitted. The fashion of this house is of three large and beautiful naves, with their arches and vaulted roofs. They appear to be of wood, and because all

[1] *Synaxa.*

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346 is painted, it is not certain whether it is stone or wood. It has two sets of cloisters round the body of the church, both
346 covered in, and much painted with figures of apostles,
532 patriarchs, prophets, and many things of the Old Law, and
353 many angels, and St. George on horseback, who is in all the churches. This monastery also possesses a great cloth, like a piece of tapestry, on which is the crucifix and effigy of Our Lady and the apostles, and other figures of patriarchs and prophets, and each one has his Latin name written, so that no man of the country made it. It has many small and ancient pictures, not well made, and they are not upon the altars, for it is not their custom: they keep them in a
[212] sacristy, mixed up with many books, and they bring them out on feast days. There is in this monastery a very large kitchen and bakehouse, also a very large refectory, in which
792 they eat. They mostly eat three and three[1] in a large dish,
262 it is not deep, but flat like a tray, and their food is very
[264] poor. The bread is of maize and barley, and other grain which they call *taffo*,[2] a small black grain. They make this bread round, and of the size and roundness of a citron,[3] and they give three of these to each friar: to the novices they give three loaves to two of them, it is a matter of amazement how they can maintain themselves. They also give them a few vegetables, without salt or oil. Of this food they send to a great many old pensioners, who do not come to the refectory. Besides seeing these things when we
792 buried Matthæus, I saw them many times, because I came there to pass time with the friars, principally on feast days, when we were near there. In this way I learned about them and their property, and revenues and customs. In my opinion there were generally always a hundred friars in this

[1] By threes.

[2] Mansfield Parkins calls it teff, the species of corn most esteemed in this country.

[3] Zamboa, not referred to in Selves' translation.

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monastery, most of them old men of great age, and as dry as wood; very few young men. This monastery is entirely surrounded by a wall, and this wall is closed with two gates, which are always locked.

CAP. XIV.—*How the monastery of Bisan is the head of six monasteries, of the number of the brothers, and ornaments, of the "castar"[1] which they do to Philip, whom they call a Saint.*

This monastery is the head of six monasteries, which are around it in these mountains; the furthest off is at a distance of three leagues from it, and all are subject to it, and are governed and ruled by it. In each of them is a David, that is a guardian appointed by the Abbot or provincial of this monastery, who is also David under the Abba. I always heard say that there were in this monastery three thousand friars, and because I doubted it much I came here to keep the feast of our Lady of August, in order to see if they would come together. Certainly I rejoiced to see the riches of this monastery, and the procession which they made: in my judgment the friars did not exceed three hundred, and most of them were very old. There is a circuit to this monastery which surrounds the two which are like cloisters covered in, and this one which is not covered in was on that occasion all covered in with brocades and inferior brocades, and velvets of Mekkah, all long pieces, sewn one to another in order that they might shelter the whole circuit. They made a very beautiful procession through this canopied circuit; all wore cloaks of the same stuffs, brocades, and velvets of Mekkah, badly made as I mentioned above. They carried fifty small crosses of silver, of bad workmanship, and as many

[1] Should be *teskar*.

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792 thuribles of copper. When mass was said, I saw a great gold chalice and gold spoon, with which they administered the communion. Of the three hundred friars who came to this monastery, very few were those that I knew as belonging to it: and I asked some of my friends how it was, that with so large a number of friars in the monastery as they said, they were not present at such a feast. They told me that even though there were more than they had said, that they were scattered about in these monasteries and churches, and markets, to seek for their living, because that could not be in the monastery whilst they were young men; and when they were old men, and could not walk, they came to die in the monastery. On that day I saw the habit put on seventeen young men. There is a tomb in this
778 monastery which they say is of an Abba or provincial of
776 this monastery who is named Philip, and they give him the merits of a Saint, saying that there was a King Prester John who commanded that Saturday should not be observed in his kingdoms and lordships, and this Abba Philip went to that King Prester with his friars, and undertook to show how God had commanded that Saturday should be kept, and that whoever did not keep it should die by stoning, and that he would maintain this before all the fathers of Ethiopia: and he made it good before the King. Therefore
796 they say that he was a Saint for making Saturday to be
782 kept, and they treat him as a Saint, and they hold a feast for him every year, in the month of July, which they call *Castar* Philip, which means funeral or memorial of Philip.[1] On this account the people of this monastery are the most Judaizing of all the kingdoms of Prester John. I came twice to this Castar of Philip, at which they did me much honour, and they kill many cows at this feast. In one year they killed thirty, and in another year twenty-eight, and in

[1] *Castar* should be *Teskar*: Mansfield Parkyns calls it a sort of funereal feast, where charities are bestowed on the poor and the priests.

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each of the years that I came there they gave me two quarters of the fattest cow that was killed. This flesh is distributed amongst the people who come to the Castar, and the friars have none because they do not eat meat. And these cows are all brought as offerings by their breeders in the district, who vow them to Philip. This monastery, and the others that are subject to it, have this rule in addition, that no females enter them, that is to say, neither women, nor she-mules, nor cows, nor hens, nor anything else that is female. And these cows which they kill are killed a long way from the wall, and when I came there they came to the distance of a cross-bow shot to take my mule, and they took her away to their farm of Jamgargara, where Mattheus died.

CAP. XV.—*Of the agriculture of this country, and how they preserve themselves from the wild beasts, and of the revenues of the monastery.*

The friars of this monastery, and of the other monasteries subject to it, might do good works by planting trees and vines, and making gardens and orchards for their exercise; and they do nothing. The country is ready to produce everything, as is seen from that which is uncultivated: they do not plant or grow anything except millet and bee-hives. When it is night, neither they nor anybody else go out from their houses from fear of the wild beasts that are in the country, and those who watch the millet have very high resting places upon the trees, in which they sleep at night. In the district of this monastery there are, in the valleys between the mountains, very large herds of cows, kept by Arab Moors, and there go with each herd forty or fifty Moors, with their wives and children: and their headman is

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231 a Christian, because the cows that they keep belong to
563 Christian gentlemen of the country of the Barnagais. These Moors have nothing else for their labour than the milk and butter which they get from the cows, and with this they maintain themselves and their wives and children. On some occasions it happened to us to sleep near these Arabs, they accosted us to ask if we wished to buy cows, and for the price allowed us to choose them. They say that these
[484] Moors, and headmen who go with them, are all robbers under the favour of the lords to whom the cows belong, and so only large caravans travel. The revenues of this
792 monastery are very large; those which I saw and heard of
631 are, chiefly, this mountain in which the monastery is situated,
361 of an extent of ten leagues, in which they sow much millet,
[243] barley, rye, and all these pay dues to the monastery, and they are also paid on the herds. On the skirts of this mountain there are many large villages, and most of them belong to the monastery, and at a distance of one or two days' journey an infinite number of places belonging to the monastery, and are called *Gultus* of the monastery, which means *coutos* or *celeiros*,[1] according to our Portugal. Don Rodrigro the ambassador and I were going on the road to the Court, a good five days' journey from this monastery, and arriving at a town which is named *Caina* we kept Saturday and Sunday in a small village which might contain twenty people, and they told us they belonged to the monastery of Bisan. Besides that town there were a hundred villages all belonging to the monastery, and that in which we halted was one of them. We were also shown
651 many of the others, and they told us that every three years
631 they paid a horse to the monastery, and that each village
792 did this, which makes thirty-three horses every year. And in order to be certain of this I went to ask it of the *Alicaxi* of the monastery, which means the auditor or major-domo,

[1] *Couto*, an asylum, an enclosure; *celeiro*, a granary.

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because he receives, and does justice: he told me that it was 651
true that they paid the said horses. I asked why the 631
monastery wanted so many horses, since they did not ride 792
on them. He told me that they were obliged to pay horses, but that they did not give him horses, but paid fifty cows for each horse, and that this due of horses was so because these were villages of the King which paid him this due, and as he had endowed the monastery with these villages, between the monastery and the villagers this due of horses had been transmuted into cows. And over and above these dues of cows they also pay dues on fruits. Besides, at fifteen days' journey from the monastery, in the kingdom of Tigre mahom, there is a very large town belonging to the monastery named Aadete, which may be a large dukedom. This pays every year sixty horses, and an infinite number of dues and customs. In this district there are always more than a thousand friars of the monastery, because there are many churches in it, and the monastery is much favoured there. Of these friars some are very good, honourable, and devout, and others are not such. Besides these dues of horses paid to this monastery and to others, there are many villages belonging to the King which pay dues of the said horses, because this is always his due, and there are villages neighbouring to Egypt in which are large and good horses, and others near Arabia in which they are very good, but not so much so as those of Egypt.

CAP. XVI.—*How the friars impeded our departure, and of what happened to us on the road.*

Returning therefore to our journey; whilst we were still 484
at the monastery of St. Michael there arrived the man sent by the Barnagais to take us away, and with him two of our Portuguese, on the fourth day of the month of June; and he

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484 brought a few oxen and men to carry our baggage. The said man who had thus come went off at once to the mountains to fetch more oxen and people, and he came back with them. Whilst our baggage was out in the road for our departure, and the men and oxen ready, the friars came and talked so much to the people without their understanding us that they disarranged our departure, so that we again took in our baggage, and the ambassador again sent another time to the Barnagais, and Joan Escolar the clerk went thither with the man of the Barnagais, and they remained there six days. They came with orders and equipment for our departure, that is to say, that they were to conduct us and our goods, and to give us as many oxen and mules as we had need of. Even then the friars were set on impeding us greatly, as though they wished us evil. We left this monastery of St. Michael on the 15th day of June, and because there was detention in loading the baggage, on account of the oxen only coming in a few at a time, and there not being mules enough for all of us, and some having to go on foot, and also because there were few people to carry the baggage which could not go on the oxen where the country was precipitous, the bombards and four barrels of powder remained behind. Not very far from the monastery, half a league at most, the ambassador came up, and those that had remained with him, and we found all the baggage unloaded. Not being able to understand the cause for their having done it, we made them load it again; and not having yet started it all, a rumour arose amongst the negroes who were carrying our baggage, and they said that there were robbers there who were waiting for us in the road. Nevertheless we did not on that account desist from making the baggage go on in front through the bushes, because the road was narrow. The ambassador and all those that were with him determined to die upon the King's goods. The negroes were much amazed at the courage of

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ten or twelve men, who did not fear passing such steep mountains, where it was said that there were multitudes of robbers. Thus we went away, divided, with the oxen and negroes, with their burdens in front of us, going forward on our course. We travelled through very wild mountains, over ascents and descents, and very bad stony road. Most of the woods of these mountains are very large wild olive trees, from which good olive trees could be made. Issuing from these mountain ranges we entered into dry channels, which in winter time are great rivers, that is to say, as long as the showers last. As soon as the shower is finished the river is dry. These channels have on each side of them very high mountains, as rugged as those we had left behind. In these river beds there are large clumps of unknown trees, amongst which, near the rivers, there are a few wild palm trees. We slept this night in a river bed with little water in it.

CAP. XVII.—*How we passed a great mountain in which there were many apes, on a Saturday, and on the following Sunday we said mass in a village called Zalote.*

On the following day we again crossed another very high and rugged mountain ridge, over which we could not make our way, either on the mules or on foot. In this mountain there are many animals of different species, and an infinite quantity of apes in herds: and they are not generally spread over the mountain, but only where there are clefts and holes in the rock; they are not found in quantities less than two or three hundred, and beyond that number. If there is any flat ground above these precipices, that is their promenade, and no stone remains that they do not turn, and they scrape the earth so that it looks as though it were tilled. They are very large, the size of sheep, and from the middle upwards hairy like lions.

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574 middle upwards hairy like lions. We passed the mountain, and went to sleep at the foot of a village called Zalote. There will be about four or five leagues from this place to the monastery from which we set out. We halted by a running river of very good water, and when our baggage had been unloaded we went to the said village to see a very honourable gentleman, the headman of it—a very old man, who was lodged here very honourably. He gave us a very [262] hospitable reception, giving us many fowls cooked in butter, and much mead, and he sent us a very large fat cow to the place of our halt. On the following day, which was Sunday, we went to say our mass at the church of the village, which is called St. Michael, a poor church, both the fabric and the ornaments. There are in this church three 793 married priests and three others, deacons,[1] that is to say, of 796 the gospel, and all are necessary, for no less can say mass. This honourable captain I met with later as a friar in the monastery of Bisan, and he left his condition and revenues to his sons, who were honourable persons; and I saw him stand at the gate outside, and he did not enter within the monastery, and there he received the communion with the novices, and when the offices of the church were ended he remained in honour with the provincial. On this Sunday we set out again in the afternoon, because the country 133 people who conducted us wished it so. Here we began to travel through flat country fallows and tillage, in the fashion of Portugal, and the bushes which are between the tilled lands are all wild olives, without other trees. We slept by some running streams, between many good villages.

[1] *Zagoaes.* Ethiopian corruption of *diakonos.*

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CAP. XVIII.—*How we arrived at the town of Barua, and how the Ambassador went in search of the Barnagais, and of the manner of his state.* 648

We reached the town of Barua,[1] which will be three leagues from the village of Zalote, on the 28th day of June. This town is the chief place of the country and kingdom of the Barnagais, in which are his principal palaces, which they call Beteneguz,[2] which means house of the king. On this day that we arrived here the Barnagais departed hence, before our arrival, to another town, the chief place of another district, which is named Barra, and the town is called Çeruel. It seemed to us that his departure was in order not to have to receive us, and some told us that he had gone away with pain in his eyes. We were very well lodged for this country, in good large houses of one story, terraced above. On the third day of our arrival, Don Rodrigo the ambassador determined on going to see the Barnagais; and we went with him, five of us on mules, and reached the place where he was staying at vespers. The distance to this place from that at which we were halting might be three and a half or four leagues, and we went to dismount before his palace, close to the door of a church, where we offered our prayers. Then we went our way to the palace, or Beteneguz, as they call it, thinking that we should at once speak to him; and they did not allow us to enter, saying that he was sleeping. And although we waited a good bit we had no means of speaking to him. We went to rest in a goat shed, in which we barely found room; and they gave us two ox-hides with the hair on to sleep upon, and for supper bread, and wine of the country in abundance, and a sheep. On the following day we waited a long time for them to call us, and a message came for us to come. Then in the outer gate we found three men like porters,

[1] *Dibarua*, hillock seen from afar. [2] *Bait en-negus*.

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648 each one with his whip[1] in his hand, and they would not let us enter, saying that we should give them some pepper, and they kept us for a good while at the gate. Passing through this gate we arrived at another, at which stood three other porters who seemed more honourable persons; these made us wait more than half an hour standing on a little straw, and the heat was so great it killed us. Upon this the ambassador sent to say that he should bid us come in or he would return to his abode. Then the message went by one who seemed to be of higher position, and word came that we should enter. The Barnagais was in this manner, in a [342] large house of one story (for in this country there are not [352] houses of several stories), sitting on a bedstead, as is their custom, fitted with poor curtains; he had sore eyes, and his wife was sitting at the head of the bedstead. Having made our obeisance, the ambassador offered him a *master* to cure him; and he said that he had no need of him, as though he did not thank him for it. Upon this the ambassador asked him as a favour, and required on the part of Prester John, that he should order equipment to be given us for our journey, assuring him how much service he would be doing in this way to the king of Portugal, which would be well repaid to him by the King and by his Captain-major; and he, the ambassador, would tell Prester John the honour and favour which he received from him. The Barnagais asking what it was that we required, the ambassador said he wanted oxen and asses for baggage, and mules for the Portuguese. To this the Barnagais replied that he could not give any mules, and that we might buy them ourselves; that he would give orders for the rest, and would send a son of his with us to the court of Prester John, and with that he gave us our dismissal.

[1] *Azorague*, a kurbach, or whip of hide, *courache*.

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CAP. XIX.—*How they gave us to eat in the house of the Barnagais, and how in this country the journeys are not reckoned by leagues.* 648

When we were out of the house where the Barnagais was, they made us sit down in the receiving room of another house on mats on the ground, and they brought here a large trencher of barley meal, but little kneaded, and a horn of mead. And, since we had not seen such food, we would not eat it; but when we were more accustomed to the country we ate it readily. Without eating of this, we arose and came to our resting-place and then set out. This might be at two hours before midday. Having gone on our road half a league or more there came to us a man running and telling us to wait; that the mother of the Barnagais was sending us food, and took it as a misfortune our coming away without eating and not accepting the food they gave us, which was that customary in the country. We waited, and the food came to us, that is to say, five large rolls of wheat bread and a horn of mead. Let not anyone be amazed who hears of a horn of wine, because for the great lords and Prester John cows' horns are their cups for wine, and there are horns holding five or six canadas.[1] Besides this, the mother of the Barnagais sent us some of the same kneaded flour, and now we ate some of it. This meal is of parched barley, made into flour, and they mix it up with very little water, and so eat it. After this banquet we made our way to the town of Barua, where our goods and companions had remained. In this country, and in all the kingdoms of Prester John, there are no leagues, and if you ask how far it is from this place to such a place, they say: If you depart in the morning at sunrise, you will arrive when the sun is in such a place; and if you travel slowly you will arrive there when they shut up the cows, that is at

[264] [262] [415] [262] 804

[1] A Portuguese measure equal to about three pints.

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804 night. And if it is distant they say, you will arrive in a *sambete*, that is a week, and so they define it according to the distances. When I said that from Barua to Barra there
484 were from three and a half up to four leagues, that was according to our opinion, and it would not be more. We afterwards travelled there many times, and we started from one town and dined at the other, and did our business and returned to the town we had started from by daylight. The people of the country reckon this as a day's journey, because they travel very slowly. Between these two towns
[241] there is very remarkable country, tilled fields of wheat, barley, millet, pulse, lentils, and all other sorts of vegetables which the country possesses unknown to us. From the
[361] road from one place to the other more than fifty towns are to be seen: I say large towns and very good ones, all on
224 heights. In these plains and fields there are herds of wild cattle, forty or fifty in a herd. It is a chase that is very pleasant for the Portuguese, but the country people are able to do them little hurt, although they receive from them much injury to their crops.

CAP. XX.—*Of the town of Barua, and of the women and their traffic, and of the marriages which are made outside of the churches.*

621 This town of Barua in which we were staying, and where later we passed more time, may have three hundred hearths and more, a great part of them belonging to women, because this is like a court in many respects. One is that people of the Prester's court never go from here, and as many as come are not without wives. The other is because this is the residence and seat of the Barnagais, and there are continually in his house three hundred mounted men and upwards, and as many more who come every day for

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business of petitions, and few are without wives. This causes many single women to live here, and when they are old they have another resource, for in this town every Tuesday there is a great market or fair at which three or four hundred persons are brought together; and all the old women and some young ones have measures to measure wheat and salt, and they go to the market to measure and gain their living; they give hospitality to those that sleep there that day, and also take care for them of what remains to be sold for the next market day. There is another reaaon why there are many women in this town, it is because the men who have plenty of food to eat keep two or three wives; and this is not forbidden to them by the King nor by their magistrates, only by the Church. Every man who has more than one wife does not enter the church, nor does he receive any sacrament: and they hold him to be excommunicated. For a year and a half a nephew of mine and I lodged in the house of a man named Ababitay, and he had three wives still alive and acquaintances of ours, friends in honourable friendship: they said that he had had seven wives and thirty children of them. Nobody forbade them, except the Church, as has been said, which did not give them the benefit of the sacraments; and before our departure, he put away from him, and from intercourse with him, two wives, and remained with one, that is to say, the one he had last, who was the youngest, and already they gave him the sacraments, and he entered the church like anybody else, and as though he had not had more than one wife. On this account there are many women in this town, because the men are well off and are like courtiers: and they take two or three, or more if it pleases them. In this country marriages are not fixed, because they separate for any cause. I saw people married, and was at a marriage which was not in a church, and it was done in this manner. On the open space before some houses they placed a bed-

621 443 595 688 [586] 585

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585 stead, and seated upon it the bridegroom and the bride, and there came thither three priests, and they began a chaunt with Hallelujah, and then continued the chaunt, the three priests walking three times round the bedstead on which the couple were seated. Then they cut a lock of hair from the head of the bridegroom, and another from the head of the bride. They wetted these locks with mead, and placed the hair of the bridegroom on the head of the bride, and that of the bride on the head of the bridegroom, on the place from which they had cut them, and then sprinkled them with holy water: after that they kept their festivities and wedding feasts. At night they put them in a house, and for a month from that time no one saw the bride, except one man only whom they call the best man,[1] who remains all this month with the married couple, and when this month is ended the man or best friend goes away. If she is an honourable woman she does not go out of the house for
[784] five or six months, nor remove a black veil from her face:
[843] and if before that she becomes pregnant she removes the veil. When these months are ended, even though she is not pregnant, she removes the veil.

CAP. XXI.—*Of their marriages and benedictions, and of their contracts, and how they separate from their wives, and the wives from them, and it is not thought strange.*

I saw the Abima Marcos, whom they call Pope, giving blessings in the church, that is to say, before the principal door; the bride and bridegroom were also seated on a bedstead, and the Abima walked round them with incense and cross, and laid his hands on their heads, telling them to observe that which God had commanded in the gospel; and that they were no longer two

[1] *Padrinho.*

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separate persons, but two in one flesh; and that so in like 585
manner should their hearts and wills be. There they remained until mass had been said, and he gave them the communion, and bestowed on them the blessing. And this I saw done in the town of Dara, in the Kingdom of Xoa.[1] I saw another performed in the town of Çequete, in the Kingdom of the Barnagais. When they make these marriages they 586
enter into contracts, as for instance: If you leave me or I [675]
you, that one that causes the separation shall pay such a penalty. And they set the penalty according to the persons, so much gold or silver, or so many mules, or cloths, or cows, or goats, or so many measures of wood. And if either of them separate, that one immediately seeks a cause of separation for such and such reasons, so that few incur the penalty, and so they separate when they please, both the husbands and the wives. If there are any that observe the marriage rule, they are the priests, who never can separate, and cultivators, who have an affection for their wives because they help them to bring up their sons, and to harrow and weed their tillage, and at night when they come to their house they find a welcome reception: thus in effect or perforce they are married for the whole of their lives. As I said that they imposed penalties at marriages, the first Barnagais that we knew, whose name was Dori, separated from his wife, and paid her the penalty of a hundred gold ounces, which were a thousand cruzados, and he married another woman. And the wife that he separated from married a noble gentleman who was named Aaron, a brother of the said Barnagais. Both the brothers had sons, known to us, of this woman, and these were, or are, great lords, both are brothers of the mother of Prester John, whom all of us knew. All of us who were there knew Romana Orque,[2] sister of the Prester John, who is a noble lady married to a great lord, a noble young gentleman. In our time she

[1] Shoa. [2] *Ruimond Wark*, the golden pomegranate.

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586 separated from this husband and married a man more than forty years of age, who is one of the great lords of the court; the title of this one whom she married is Abuquer, and his father Cabeata. This is the greatest lord there is in the court. Thus I saw and knew many of these separations; I have named these because they are of great personages.
[587] And because I said that Aaron married the wife of his brother, let not him that reads it be amazed, because it is the usage of the country. They do not think it strange for
[607] a brother to sleep with the wife of his brother. This Aaron moreover had sons of her who had been the wife of his brother, and he left her and married another to whom he is now married.

CAP. XXII.—*Of the manner of baptism and circumcision, and how they carry the dead to their burial.*

304 Circumcision is done by anybody without any ceremony, only they say that so they find it written in the books, that God commanded circumcision. And let not the reader of this be amazed—they also circumcise the females as well as the males, which was not in the Old Law. Baptism they do
851 in this manner: they baptize males at forty days, and females at sixty days after their birth, and if they die before they go without baptism. I, many times and in many places, used to tell them that they committed a great error, and went against what the Gospel says: Quod natum est ex carne caro est; et quod natum est ex spiritu spiritus est. They answered me many times that the faith of their mother sufficed for them, and the communion which she received whilst in a state of pregnancy.[1] They perform this baptism

[1] This opinion of the Abyssinians appears to have anticipated the Sorbonne judgment of 1733, given in the 20th chapter of *Tristram Shandy*.

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in the church, with water which they keep in a vase, and which they bless, and they put oil on the forehead and on the breasts and shoulder-blades. They do not put ointment,[1] nor do they have it, nor the oil of extreme unction. This office of catechism which they celebrate seems to me to be much the same form as the Roman, and at the time of pouring the water on the child they do it in this way. One who is the godfather takes the child from the hands of the woman that has it and raises it, holding it under the arms, and holds it suspended; and the priest who baptizes, with one hand holds the vase and pours the water over the child, and with the other washes it all over, saying in his language the words which we say, that is: I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. They always perform this office on a Saturday or a Sunday, and it is done in the morning at mass, because every child that receives baptism receives the communion, and they give it in very small quantities, and cause it to be swallowed by means of water. With regard to this, also, I used to tell them that this communion was very dangerous, and in no wise necessary. As I said that they put oil on the forehead, you should know that every child comes to baptism shaved with a razor, and the scars or marks which they bear on the nose, between the eyes, and at the corners of the eyes, are not made by fire nor for anything of Christianity, but with cold iron for ornament, and because they say that it is good for the sight. There are here women who are very skilful at making these marks. They make them in this manner: they take a clove of garlic, large and moist, and place it on the corner of the eye; with a sharp knife they cut round the garlic, and then with the fingers widen the cut, and put upon it a little paste of wax, and over the wax another paste of dough, and press it down for one night with a cloth, and there remains for ever a mark which appears like a burn, because their color, *Crisma*, is dark.

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000 764 a burn, because their colour is dark. On the occasion of death, I never saw great personages borne away; but of small people, and of others rather better, an infinite number. Their burials are in this manner. They do not use candles after death, but much incense. They carry them away wrapped up[1] in a shroud, and some of the more honoured have over the shroud tanned ox-hides, and are placed on trestles. The priests come for them, and pray shortly, and then set out at once with them on the way to the church, with cross, thurible, and holy water, running so that a man cannot catch them up. They do not bring the dead man into the church, but place him close to the grave; they do not use our office for him, nor do they recite psalms, neither do they say anything from the Book of Job. I asked what it was that they prayed; they told me that they read the Gospel of St. John all complete. And so they give him to the grave with their incense and holy water, and they do not say mass for the defunct, nor of devotion for any living person, nor more than one mass a day in each church; and all are communicants, as many as go to it.

CAP. XXIII.—*Of the situation of the town of Barua, chief place of the kingdom of the Barnagais, and of his hunting.*

361 This town of Barua is very good, and it is situated on a very high rock above a river, upon which are situated the king's houses, which they call Beteneguz, which means houses of the king. They are well situated in the manner of a fortress. All the rest is a great plain and an infinite number of large villages at the extremities of the [231] fields. There is much breeding of all sorts of flocks, cows, goats, and sheep, and of much game of all sorts

[1] *Encorilhados* for *enrodilhados*.

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goats, and sheep, and of much game of all sorts. In the river there is much fish, and many wild ducks of different kinds,[1] and on land much game of all kinds, such as wild cattle; in the plains hares in great quantity, so that every day we killed twenty or thirty of a morning, and that without dogs, but caught with nets. There are partridges of three kinds, which do not differ from ours, except in size and the colour of their legs. There are partridges like big capons of the same colour and fashion as ours, except that their beaks and feet are yellow. There are others the size of hens; these have red beaks and feet like ours. There are others the size of ours, not different in colour or in anything else, except that their beaks and feet are grey. To the taste all are very good partridges, as they are good in colour. They do not frighten them to the earth.[2] Wild hens cover the ground, quails are in infinite numbers, and so of all other birds that can be mentioned, such as parrots and other birds not known to us, great and small, and of many shapes and colours; birds of prey, such as royal eagles, falcons, hawks, sparrow hawks, blue herons, and river cranes, and all other sorts that can be mentioned. In the mountains are many hogs, stags, antelopes, gazelles, deer. It will be said, how is it that there is so much game on the land and fish in the river, when the country is so populous? I say that nobody hunts or fishes, nor have they engines nor devices, nor the will to do it; on this account the game is very easy to kill, because it is not pursued by the people. There are many wild beasts—lions, ounces, tigers, wolves, foxes, jackals, and other animals not known to us. I never heard that these wild beasts did any harm, although the people are in great fear of them; only in one place which is called Camarua, and which is about half a league from

[1] *Adens* and *marrecas*.

[2] *No las assombram a terra*: perhaps this means with a paper kite. This passage is omitted in Selve's translation.

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136 this town of Barua, a man was lying asleep at night at the door of his enclosure, and his little son was with him, keeping his cows, and a lion came and killed this man without anyone perceiving it, and he ate his nose and opened his heart, without touching the child. The people of the country were greatly afraid, and said that he would remain with a taste for man's flesh,[1] and that no one would escape from him. The Lord was pleased that he never did any more harm. We used to go hunting at that time near this place, and we never found any lion, but we found ounces and tigers; we did them no harm, neither did they do us any.

CAP. XXIV.—*Of the lordship of the Barnagais, and of the lords and captains who are at his orders and commands, and of the dues which they pay.*

643 The lordship of the Barnagais is in this manner: its title
63 is that of King, because nagais means King, and bar means sea, so Barnagais means King of the Sea. When they give him the rulership they give it him with a crown of gold on his head, but it does not last longer than what the Prester John pleases. For in our time, which was a stay of six years, there were here four Barnagais, that is to say, when we arrived Dori was Barnagais; he died, and at his death the crown came to Bulla, his son, a youth of ten or twelve years of age, by order of the Prester John. When they crowned him he was at once summoned to court, and while he was at the court Prester John took away his sovereignty and gave it to a noble gentleman, who was named Arraz anubiata. This man held it two years, and they took from him this lordship and made him the greatest lord of the court, which is Betudete,[2] and the lordship of Barnagais was given to

[1] *Cevado*, literally, allured.

[2] The favourite or preferred, *Bitwaddad*, because he was liked.

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another lord, who was named Adiby, who was now Bar- 643
nagais. Beneath the Barnagais are some great lords whom 631
they call Xuums, which means captains; and these are, first, Xuum Cire, a very great captaincy, he is now married to a sister of Prester John. We never went to this country and Xuumeta because it is distant and out of the way. There 643
is another Xuumeta named Ceruil. We knew this lordship, 701
and they say that its Xuum brings into the field fifteen 631
thousand spearmen with shields and archers. Also Xuum Cama, and Buno Xuum, and Xuum bono. These Xumetas had been one, and on account of its being large, and the Prester having misgivings that they might set themselves up against the Barnagais, he made it into two, and even yet each of them is very large. They say that this lordship which is now two was the dominion of Queen Candace, without having been larger in her time. She was the first Christian that there was in this country, and whom the Lord called powerful. Also two other captaincies, one is named Dafilla, the other Canfila; these two border on Egypt, and their captains are like lords of the marches. All these captains before mentioned are of kettledrums, [534]
which nobody except great lords can carry: and all these serve with the Barnagais in wars when he goes to them, and wherever he may go. They have other great gentlemen under their command who are called Arraz,[1] which means heads. We knew one of these, who was named Arraz Aderaan, he is head over fifteen thousand men at arms, whom they name chavas. I saw this Arraz Aderaan twice at the court, both times I saw him before the gate of the [292]
Prester John going without a shirt, and from his waist downwards a very good silk cloth, and on his shoulders the skin of a lion, in his right hand a spear, and in his left hand [411]
a shield. I asked how it was so great a lord went about in that manner, they told me that the greatest honour

[1] *Ar-ras.*

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
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643 he had, since he was Arraz of the Chaufas, that is, head or
701 captain of the men at arms, was to go about like a man at
631 arms. In the fashion that he went, there followed behind him twenty or thirty men with spears and bucklers, so that he goes about the court like a provost with his men. I knew another Arraz Tagale, and Arraz Jacob, lords of large lands, and many other Xuums, lords of lands, but without titles. Thus the Barnagais is the lord of many
643 lords, and of many lands and people, and so he and all
631 these lords that have been mentioned are subject to the
65 Prester John, and he removes and appoints them as he
439 pleases: so they pay to him large dues. As all these lords and their lordships are on the side of Egypt and Arabia, from whence come the good horses, and the brocades and the silks, they pay in these same goods: that is to say, horses, brocades, and other silks. They come to the Barnagais with all these dues, and the Barnagais to Prester John, and pays for himself and for the others, in each year, a hundred and fifty horses; as to the brocades and silks, it cannot be known how much they amount to, only I heard say that they were many; I also heard that they pay a large sum of cotton cloths from India for the customs which they levy in the port of Arquiquo.

CAP. XXV.—*Of their method of guarding their herds from wild beasts, and how there are two winters in this country: and of two churches that are in the town of Barua.*

[621] The settlement of this town of Barua and of those
231 adjoining it, is this. There are ten, twelve, or fifteen houses, and one walled and closed yard, served by a gate: in this yard they shut up their domestic cows which they use for their milk and butter, and also small flocks, and mules and asses. They keep the gate well fastened, and a great fire,

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and men who sleep there to watch, from fear of the animals that roam about the villages all night: and if they did not keep this watch nothing alive would remain which they would not devour. The people who go to sow millet in the mountains of Bisan belong to this country and the neighbouring towns. The reason why they go and do it is this. Here there are very numerous grain crops of every kind and nature that can be mentioned, as I have already said; and because it is near to the sea, by which go all the provisions for Arabia, Mekkah, Zebid, Jiddah, and Toro,[1] and other parts; and they carry the provisions to the sea to sell them. And because in this country the winters are divided into seasons, and the seed crops do not grow except with the rains, they go to sow these millet fields at the mountain of Bisan, where it is winter in the months of February, March, and April. There is this same winter in a mountain called Lama, in this kingdom of the Barnagais, which is fully eight days' journey from the mountain of Bisan. In another country, which is named Doba, and which is quite a month's journey from this lordship of Lama, there is winter in these same months. As for these millet fields, they require rains, and as these winters happen out of season, they go and sow them where it rains, and so profit by both winters. In this town of Barua are two churches with many priests, one close to the other, one is for men, the other for women. The men's church is called St. Michael, that of the women is named after the apostles Peter and Paul. They say that a great lord, who was then Barnagais, built the men's church, and gave it the privilege that no woman should enter it, except only the wife of the Barnagais, with one damsel, whenever she went to take the communion, and even she does not now enter the church, but takes the communion at the door in the inner circuit with the laity, and so the

[1] Mount Sinai.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
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346 other women do in the church of the apostles, who take it
562 in its place. I always saw the women of the Barnagais go
[644] to the women's church to take the communion with the other women, and I did not see them use the privilege which they say they have, of taking the communion, with one damsel, in the church of the men. The circuits of the churchyards join to one another; they are of very high
796 walls. They make the sacramental bread for both churches in one building, and they say the masses in both churches at the same time, and the priests who serve in one church serve also in the other; that is two thirds of the priests in the men's church, and one third in the women's church, and so they are distributed. These churches have not got tithes, but they have got much land belonging to the priests, and they put it out to profit and divide the revenues of the lands among themselves: the Barnagais gives what is necessary to the churches, such as ornaments, wax, butter, incense in sufficient quantity, and he supplies them with
[792] everything. There may be in these churches twenty priests and always twenty-two friars. I never saw a church of priests which had not got friars, nor a monastery of friars which had got priests; because the friars are so numerous that they cover the world, both in the monasteries as also in the churches, roads, and markets: they are in every place.

CAP. XXVI.—*How the priests are, and how they are ordained, and of the reverence which they pay to the churches and*
793 *their churchyards.*

684 The priests are married to one wife, and they observe the
587 law of matrimony better than the laity: they live in their houses with their wives and children. If their wife should die they do not marry again; neither can the wife, but she

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may become a nun or remain a widow as she pleases. If a 793
priest sleeps with another woman whilst his wife is alive he 684
does not enter the church any more, nor does he enjoy its 587
goods, and remains as a layman. And this I know from having seen a priest accused before the patriarch of having slept with a woman, and I saw that the priest confessed the offence, and the patriarch commanded him not to carry a cross in his hand, nor to enter a church, nor to enjoy the liberties of the church, and to become a layman. If any priests after becoming widowers marry, they remain laymen, As it happened to Abuquer, who married Romana Orque, sister of Prester John, who I have already said was a priest, chief chaplain of Prester John, and he was disordained[1] and made a layman. He no longer enters the church, and receives the communion at the door of the church as a layman, and among the women. The sons of the priests 793
are for the most part priests, because in this country there are no schools, nor studies, nor masters to teach, and the [871]
clergy teach that little that they know to their sons: and so they make them priests without more legitimisation, neither does it seem to me that they require it, since they are legitimate sons. All are ordained by the Abima Markos, for in all the kingdoms of Ethiopia there is no other bishop or person who ordains. The orders are given in two stages, as I will relate further on. I with my own eyes saw them given many times. In all this country the churchyards are [764]
inclosed by very strong walls, that the wild beasts may not disinter the dead bodies. They show them great reverence, [516]
no man riding on a mule passes before a church, even though he is going in a great hurry, without dismounting, until he has passed the church and churchyard a good bit.

[1] *Foy desordenado e feito leigo*; not a correct expression.

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CAP. XXVII.—*How we departed from Barua, and of the bad equipment we had until we arrived at Barra.*

648

We were at Barua the first time, without their giving us equipment for our departure, for eleven days; we departed on the 28th day of June 1520, joyful and contented, because we were travelling on our way; and those that conducted us went with our baggage a distance of half a league, saying that their bounds went no further, and that another town had to take us further on. As I said, it was in June, in the force of the winter of this country, and they set us down, and our goods, in a plain, and very heavy rain. The ambassador and three of us went on the road to Barra to speak to the Barnagais, the factor and clerk and the other Portuguese remaining with our goods. As soon as we arrived we went to the palace of the Barnagais to tell him what his vassals were doing to us. They did not give us an opportunity to speak to him that day. On the following day we did not sleep in the morning, and went to speak to him: as soon as we spoke to him he told us he would at once send for the goods. He ordered it to be brought a distance of a league and a half, in which it passed through three districts, by reason of the great population which is in that country, and they came and placed the baggage in another plain, where they let it remain four days in the rain and storms. In these days the ambassador and those that were with him were not quiet: at one time we went to the baggage, which was a league and a half off from us, at other times at our resting place, at others in the house of the Barnagais, to require him to send for these goods which belonged to the King, and were going to Prester John, or to tell us that he did not choose, and we would have it set on fire, and go our way disembarrassed. His speech was always fair, but the fruits of it never came. When four days were completed he sent for the goods.

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CAP. XXVIII.—*How the goods arrived at the town of Barra, and of the bad equipment of the Barnagais.*

On the 3rd day of July of the said year, '20, our baggage 648
arrived at the town of Barra, where we were. We hoped to start at once, and went to speak to the Barnagais requiring him to despatch us. We met with good words from him. On the following day a gentleman from the court of Prester John arrived, and the Barnagais gave him such a reception that he forgot us. When this gentleman arrived the Barnagais went out of the town to receive him at a small hill near the houses; and there went out with him many people, and he was naked from the waist upwards. The gentleman placed himself on the highest spot above the rest, and his first words were: the King sends to salute you. At these words all went with their hand upon the ground, [576]
which is the courtesy and reverence of this country. After that, he spoke the message which he had brought, and when he had finished hearing it the Barnagais clothed himself with rich garments, and took the gentleman to his house. It is the usage of this country to hear the words which the [203]
Prester sends outside the house, and on foot, and he to whom they are sent has to be naked above the waist until they have been delivered, and if the message is one of satisfaction on the part of Prester John, as soon as it is given he at once dresses himself: if it expresses his dissatisfaction, he remains naked as when he heard it. This Barnagais is brother of the mother of Prester John. After this the ambassador, and we with him, came to speak to the Barnagais, and he sent us away saying that for the love of God we should leave him, that he was sick. When we came they did not allow us to enter, saying that he was sleeping. So much passed of this sort that the ambassador said that he ill remembered what he had sworn and promised to the Captain-major of the King of Portugal, that is to say,

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to assist us and order equipment to be given us for our journey, that he forgot all this, and also that he was not mindful of the friendship which they had established and sworn, since he did so little for the affairs of the King of Portugal. Neither on this account did he make any more haste, but always excused himself with his guest, and with being ill. On the 6th of July seven or eight horsemen arrived, very gaily caparisoned, these were Moors, and seemed to be honourable persons, they came from other countries, and brought many very beautiful horses, which they were bringing to pay as tribute which they owed to Prester John and the Barnagais. As the arrival of the Moors redounded to his profit, neither his guests nor his sickness impeded him. The great reception and honour which the Barnagais paid to these Moors gave us great trouble. The ambassador had told him that he wanted twelve mules, and asked him to order them to be lent: he said that he could not lend them, and that we should buy them. When we wished to buy these mules which the people of the country were selling to us, the servants of the Barnagais came and interrupted the purchase, telling the vendors not to sell them, and that if they sold them they would be punished, and the gold would be taken away from them, for in this country money is not current. This happened in such manner that the rumour of it spread throughout the country, and the people told us that even if they wished to sell to us they did not dare, from fear of the Barnagais, because he wished to sell his own mules, and therefore forbade their selling them. (He has another method with the people of his country.) In all the kingdoms of Prester John money is not current, but only gold by weight, and the principal weight is called *ouquia*,[1] and this, which is an ounce, makes in weight ten cruzados, and for change there is a half ouquia, and from twelve drachms to ten make

[1] A gold coin in some parts of Africa.

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an ouquia. This Barnagais forbade the people in his country having any other weights except his own, and they had to ask the Barnagais or his factors for the weights whenever they had to sell or receive gold, so that he had knowledge of what was in the country, and he takes it when he pleases, according to what his country people say, who must know it well. 436

CAP. XXIX.—*Of the church of the town of Barra, and its ornaments, and of the fair there, and of the merchandise, and costumes of the friars, nuns, and priests.*

In this town of Barra there is a church of Our Lady, large, new, very well painted and well built, and handsomely ornamented with many brocades, crimson silks, and Mekkah velvets, and red camlets. The church in this town is served like that at Barua, only that the offices are more solemnized because the Barnagais resides here, and because here there are more clergy and an infinite number of friars. The church is managed by priests. I saw them make a procession round the church in the greater circuit, which is of the churchyard. In it there were many priests, friars, and men and women, because in this church the women receive the communion in the place where the laity do so. In that procession I saw the ornaments which I have mentioned: they must have taken quite thirty turns round the church chaunting like a litany, and sounding many drums and cymbals, as they sound them when they make a procession before the effigy of Our Lady on Sundays and feast days; and they sing and celebrate a feast; and likewise when they give the communion on feast days. They said that this procession was made in supplication to God for rain for their sowing. The bells are of stone, like those of other churches, and the bells badly made. In this town there is a great fair like that of Barua, and so likewise in all the 346 796 443

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443 places which are chief towns of districts, every week. The fairs consist of bartering one thing for another, as for instance, an ass for a cow, and that which is of least value gives to the other two or three measures of bread. By means of bread they buy stuffs, and with stuffs they buy mules and cows, and whatever they want, for salt, incense, pepper, myrrh, camphor, and other small articles.[1] They buy fowls and capons, and whatever they need or want to buy is all to be found at these fairs in exchange for others, for there is no current money. The principal merchants 792 292 at these fairs are priests, friars, and nuns. The friars are decent in their habits, which are full, and reaching to the ground. Some wear yellow habits of coarse cotton stuff, others habits of tanned goat skins like wide breeches,[2] also yellow. The nuns also wear the same habits; the friars wear, besides, capes of the fashion of Dominican friars, of the same yellow skins or stuffs, they wear hats; and the nuns wear neither capes nor hats, but [302] only the habit, and are shaven with a razor; and they wear a leather strap wound or fastened round the head. When they are old women they wear fillets[3] round their heads over their tonsures. These nuns are not cloistered, nor do they live together in convents, but in villages, and in the monasteries of the friars, on account of belonging to those houses and order. The order is all one, and the nuns give obedience where they receive their habits. With regard to entering churches and monasteries, the nuns do not enter except as other women do. There is a great multitude of nuns, as well as of friars; they say that some of them are very holy women, and others are not so. The priests show very 793 302 little difference from the laity in their dress, because all [292] wear a good cloth wrapped round, like smart men, and their difference is that they carry a cross in their hand, and are shaven, and the laity wear long hair. The priests also have

[1] *Bechugarias.* [2] *Zafoens* or *Safoens.* [3] *Tufas.*

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this, that they do not cut their beard, and the laity shave below the chin and the throat. There are other priests, whom they call Debeternas, which means canons; these belong to great churches, which are like their cathedrals or collegiate churches, and are not monasteries. These are very well dressed, and at once appear as what they are: these do not go to the fairs and markets.

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[302]

CAP. XXX.—*Of the state of the Barnagais and manner of his house, and how he ordered a proclamation to be made to go against the Nobiis,*[1] *and the method of his justice.*

The service of this Barnagais is very poor in state, although he is a great lord and has the title of king. As many times as we spoke to him we always found him seated on a bedstead beneath a coverlid, and himself covered with hairy cotton cloths which they name *basutos*; they are good for the country, and there are some here of a high price. Behind the sides of the bedstead, walls, without anything except four swords hung each on a pole, and two great books, also suspended on poles. In front of the bedstead, mats on the floor, upon which sit those who come; the houses rarely swept, his wife always seated on a mat near the head of the bedstead, many people always before him, the great people seated on mats. In sight of his bedstead stand four horses, one always saddled, and the others covered, not caparisoned for war, but as horses are in the stables. In these houses of his are two inclosures, and each one has its gate, and in it porters with whips in their hands, and in the one nearest to him are smarter porters. Between these gates, the inner one and the outer one, is always his Alicaxi, which means his judge, hearing causes and administering justice. If the cause is important,

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[1] Nubians.

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693 he hears the parties until he has determined upon it, and then he goes and relates the cause to the Barnagais, who gives the sentence: if it is a small cause, or if the parties wish it, the Alicaxi gives sentence, and the cause is concluded. Moreover, in all judgments, whether the Barnagais or the Alicaxi judges, there must be present an honourable man, whom they call by the name of his office Malaganha, who is like a tabellion or notary of Prester John, and if either of the parties wishes to appeal, he requires from this man the certifying of the cause for Prester John and his judges. All the lords of the countries of any of the kingdoms of Prester John have an Alicaxi and a Malaganha appointed by the Prester; so also have the captains subject to the Barnagais and to the other great lords. The gentlemen who are about the house of the Barnagais, and other grandees who come on business, have this manner of coming from their abodes. Whilst at the place he is living at he mounts his mule, seven, eight, or ten men on foot go before him as far as the first gate, and there he dismounts. If he is a person of greater importance, he takes seven, eight, or ten mules, or else three or four, according as the person is. So he dismounts at the first gate, and arrives at the second, after that, if they are bidden at once to enter, they go in, if not, they sit outside like beehives in the sun, without any other pastime. All these honourable persons wear sheep skins at
[292] their necks or on their shoulders, and he who wears the skin of a lion, tiger, or ounce, is more honourable. When
576 they come before the lord they take off the skin, as we take off our caps. Whilst we were in this town of Barra on a
721 market day, they made a solemn proclamation that the Barnagais intended to make war on the Nobiis, five or six days' journey from the limits of his country, towards Egypt, neighbouring to the countries of Canfilla and Dafolha,[1] which are subject to the Barnagais, as I have before mentioned.

[1] Dafilla.

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These Nobiis are neither Moors, nor Jews, nor Christians. [721]
It is said that they had been Christians, and had lost their faith, and are thus without any faith. They say that there is among these Nobiis much fine gold. They said that but a short time ago they had killed a son of the Barnagais, and that he wished to go and avenge his death. I heard say that in the frontier districts of these Nobiis there were four or five hundred horsemen, very great warriors, and that it is a country very well supplied with provisions, and it cannot be otherwise because it is on this and the further side of the Nile, which they say is a very fertile country. The proclamation said that he would set out in fifty days from that time: but up to this there had been no muster nor movement of arms. This would be because in the country there are not many, and few people possess them except the Chavas, who are the men at arms. These [411]
men have javelins, bows and arrows. These great lords [714]
have a few swords, hangers, and shirts of mail (not many of them). On the occasion of this little revolt, the Barnagais asked the ambassador for swords, and the ambassador gave him his own, which he wore on the road, and which was very good, and he still persistently begged another rich sword with ornaments which he carried with him, saying he wanted it for the war he was going to make, and the ambassador not being able to excuse himself, it suited him to buy another from his companions with gilt ends and a velvet scabbard, which he gave him instead of his own. And in the house where we kept our goods, and where our Portuguese slept, which was a house without doors, on the following night they stole from them two swords and a helmet. All this would be on account of the war.

[pp. 66-400 have not been processed for the files.-Analyst]

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CAP. IX.—*Of certain questions which the Archbishop of Braga put to Francisco Alvarez, and the answers which he gave.*

000 While we were at the Court in the city of Coimbra, no long time elapsed before the King, our sovereign, departed with his Court to Almeirim, where on some occasions I reminded his Highness about sending me to carry out the journey which I had promised and sworn to Prester John to make, namely, to carry his letters and a cross of gold and his obedience to the Holy Father in Rome. His Highness told me that he was fully mindful of this, but that the roads did not give an opportunity for this, on account of the wars with France. From Almeirim His Highness departed with his Court for the city of Lisbon, where, in the manner above mentioned, I reminded His Highness of my despatch to Rome. He gave me the same answer as before. Upon this, Bras Neto was named ambassador; it was not said to what place. He, Bras Neto, begged me to ask the King to send me with him. I begged of the King the favour to send me with Bras Neto, since he was going to Rome. His Highness told me that Bras Neto was going to the emperor and not to Rome, and that he well remembered about sending me, but that I could not go except when Don Martinho went, and that he would soon despatch him. At this time a benefice becoming vacant in the archbishopric of Braga, His Highness did me the favour to bestow it on me, and, with his presentation, sent me to the archbishop, for him to confirm me in it. Whilst I was with his lordship, he never ceased asking me about the affairs of Prester John. I answered him truly, as I knew them very well, and his lordship ordered everything to be written down, and the questions and answers are the following:

Questions which Senhor Don Diogo de Sousa, archbishop

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000 of Braga, put to Francisco Alvarez, chaplain of the king our sovereign, respecting some particulars of the country of Prester John, beyond those which the said Francisco Alvarez has written in his book; the said Francisco Alvarez having gone to the said Prester in the company of Don Rodrigo de Lima, who went as ambassador to the said Prester, on account of the death of Duarte Galvam, who was sent there by the King Don Manuel, may he be in holy glory; which persons reached the port of Masua, an island in the Red Sea, close to the town of Arquico, country of the Prester, on the 27th day of April 1520, and they passed six[1] years in the said country and lordships of the Prester, and they returned to embark at the said port of Masua, close to Arquico, in the year 1526 on the 28th day of April; and the said Francisco Alvarez came to this city of Braga to be confirmed in the benefice which the King our sovereign gave him. He remained in it some days, and the said Francisco Alvarez reached this city of Braga on the 30th July, of the year 1529.

264 He[1] said that usually the people do not eat only once a 262 day, and this at night, and that the monks and clergy fast 784 strictly during Lent, so that many only eat three times in the week, namely, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, that they do not drink wine of grapes nor of honey, and that they drink other beverages which are made of other vegetables.

In Lent they eat neither meat not milk, nor eggs nor butter, even though they are near dying, they eat vegetables and some few fruits which are in the country. All the men and women, great and small, fast all the Wednesdays and Fridays in the year; this is not to be understood from Christmas to the Purification of Our Lady, nor from Easter to Trinity, when there is no fast. Friars, priests, gentlemen and noblemen, fast all the week excepting Saturday and Sunday.

[1] Should be seven years.

1 [the author, i.e., Alvarez]

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He said that no men died at the hands of justice, that they flogged many, and put out the eyes of some, and of others they cut off a foot or a hand, according to the quality the crime; but that he had seen a man burned because he was found to have committed two robberies in a church.

That the Pope or Patriarch of the country of Prester John is called Abima, which means father, and that there is nobody else in all the kingdoms and lordships of the Prester who confers orders except him.

The Prester John is called Acegue,[1] which means emperor, and he is called Neguz, which means king.

There is no manner of physic, only they apply fire; in some sickness they use cupping without fire, and for headaches, they bleed on the head with a knife placed on the vein, and they strike it with a stick so that it should draw blood, and also they take some herbs as a beverage to cure themselves.

In all the country there is no town which exceeds one thousand six hundred inhabitants, and of these there are few, and there are no walled towns or castles, but villages without number. The houses generally, or most of them, are round, and all of one story, covered with terraces or thatch, and courtyards round them. People generally sleep on ox-hides, others on beds made of straps of the same hides; no kind of table. They eat in flat trenchers, like trays of great width, without napkins or tablecloths. They have basins of very black earthenware like jet, and pipkins of the same clay for drinking water and wine. Many eat raw meat, and others eat it roasted on the ashes, others roasted over woodfire, and others over cowdung where there is no wood. There is much wax there, and tapers and candles; they do not make candles of tallow. There is no oil there except a kind which they call *hena*, and which is made from some herbs like Mayweed;[2] it has no taste, and is beautiful as gold. There

[1] *Alegue*, an Emperor.

[2] *Pampilhos*, also called *olho de boy*.

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136 is no fish there except very little from the rivers; from the There sea none.

795 There are no monasteries except of St. Anthony, and
792 not of any other order, as some friars say who come from there.

291 The gentlemen, monks, canons, and priests are clothed; most of the other people are bare from the waist upwards, and a sheepskin on the shoulders, with the front and hind feet tied together.

792 Most of the monasteries are situated on high mountains,
346 or in great ravines; they have large revenues and juris-
[262] diction. In many monasteries they do not eat meat all the year, and fish very few times, as they have not go it in the country. The services of these monasteries are psalms and prose, and so it is done in the churches of the canons.

796 Every church has two curtains, one on this side of the altar with little bells, and no one but priests enter inside this curtain; and another curtain in the middle of the church. And no one but persons in orders enter the church, and many gentlemen and honourable persons are ordained in order to enter the church. They go to the door of all the churches and monasteries to read the epistles and gospels, and they say them rapidly, and there they give the communion to the people.

The priests consecrate at the altar, and do not show the sacrament. When the priest who says mass comes to take the communion, he takes a particle from the top, and the other two large parts he leaves for the communion of the people. All the people who come to the church have to receive the communion every day, or else not come to church. When the communion is ended, they give them a little blessed water with which they wash their mouths.

Nobody sits down in the church, nor do they enter it shod; they do not hem or spit, nor do they let any dog or other animal come into the church. They confess standing,

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and so receive absolution. They pray in the churches of the canons as in those of the friars. Friars do not marry, canons and priests do so. When the canons live together in the circuit they eat in their houses, and the friars eat in community. The chiefs of these churches are called Licacanate. The wives of the canons have houses outside of the circuit, where they go to live with them: the son of a canon remains a canon, and the son of a priest not, except he chooses later to become one. No tithes are paid to any church, they live on the large properties which the churches and monasteries possess. Complaints against the clergy are dealt with before the secular justice. 796 [782] 793 [694]

The vestment is made like a shirt, and the stole with a hole in the middle, and put over the head; they have no maniple, nor amice, nor girdle; priests and friars all have their heads shaved, and the beards not. The friars say mass with their hats on their heads, and the priests with their heads bare. 292 [302]

In no church is more than one mass said, and no mass is said for alms, not even for the dead. When any person dies, the priests come with cross and holy water and incense, and recite certain prayers for him, and carry him off to burial very hurriedly: next day they bring offerings: the churchyards are all closed, so that nothing can enter them. 794

Prester John has no determined place of abode, he always goes about the country in tents, and he will always have in his camp five or six tents among good and common ones: and there will always be at Court of people for the horses and mules from fifty thousand upwards. 643 644

The kitchen of Prester John is a good crossbow shot behind his quarters, and they bring his food in this manner: all that he has to eat comes in porringers and dishes of very black earthenware on wooden trays, and pages bring them, and above the pages come a pallium of silk, which covers them so that these viands come with reverence.

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643 735 There are many royal farms belonging to the Prester, in which a great quantity of bread is gathered, which is given to honourable persons, and the poor, and to poor monasteries and churches, without Prester John making any profit of the produce and revenue of these farms, but only alms.

241 In all the country there is much bread, wheat and barley; in other lands there is more millet than wheat or barley, in these, and where wheat and barley, there is much taff and dagusha (seeds not known to us), pulse, beans, pease, and all vegetables; and in other lands all sorts of grain and vegetables in great quantity and abundance. There are 312 many water springs, but no fountains made of stone. In the town of Aquaxumo, where the Queens Saba and Candacia were, there are many wells and tanks made with good masonry.

532 In the town of Aquaxumo there are images very well made, and figures of lions and dogs, and oxen, and other antiquities made of stone. In this town Queen Candacia became a Christian by the advice of her eunuch, whom St. Philip baptized by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

491 [563] In all this country there is no bridge of stone or of wood; in no part of the kingdoms or lordships of Prester John are there Jews. There are infinite quantities of sugar canes, 137 and they do not know how to make it; grapes and peaches are ripe in the month of February and end in April: there are many oranges, lemons and citrons, and few pot herbs, because they do not plant them.

136 Animals, namely lions, ounces, tigers, wolves, deer, antas,[1] wild cows, foxes, lynxes,[2] wild boars, porcupines, civet cats, roedeer, gazelles, elephants, and other animals not known to us, of which the country is full, except two which I never saw there, namely bears and rabbits.

Birds, partridges of three kinds, like ours, other fowls

[1] *Anta* is a South American animal. [2] Probably hyænas.

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which we call of Guinea, there they are called zegra, quails, 136
pigeons, turtles, hawks, falcons, kites, eagles, thrushes, sparrows, swallows, nightingales, larks, wild ducks, of different kinds,[1] and other waterfowl, herons, cranes, *hemas*, and all other birds that may be in the world, and not known to us; and there are all in this country except magpies and cuckoos, which I never saw, nor heard of their being there.

There are so many apes, that in the kingdom of the Barnagais, in a town which is named Ceroel, at the time the harvest is ripe, they pursue them till they make them pass a mountain; and they keep guard over them in a pass by day, because at night they do not move about, and they give a certain provision to two men who keep guard over them until the corn is gathered in, when they let them loose, or leave off keeping watch over them.

There is much basil in the thickets, and there are none 137
of our trees except cypresses, plumtrees, and willows by the rivers; there are no melons, cucumbers, nor horse-radish.

In the country there is no gold or silver money, and pur- 436
chases are made by exchange of one thing for another, principally salt, which is current throughout the country as money.

There is linen there, but it gives no fibre, and no stuff is 248
made with it; there is much cotton, and stuff made of it; there is much coloured cloth, and there is a very cold country where they wear serge.

The churches there are well built, but the walls are not 346
well wrought, and they do not place anything upon them; they pitch [the roof] upon props, which reach from the ground upwards.

In the country there is gold, silver, copper and tin, but 135
they do not know how to get it out of the mines.

[1] *Adens, marrecas.*

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164 There are many lepers in this country, and they do not live separated from the people, they live all together; there are many people who, out of their devotion, wash them, and tend their sores with their hands.

231 There is a great quantity of honey in all the country, and the bees are not in hives, but inside the houses, where the cultivators live, clinging to the walls on the inside, where they have a mode of egress outside, and also inside they surround the house: but they do not on this account desist from dwelling in the house, because the bees go outside. There are a great number of these swarms of bees, chiefly in the monasteries, there are also many in the woods and mountains, and the men put hives near the trees and fill them with bees, and bring them in them to the houses.

346 Since no one sits in the churches, at their doors outside of them, and within the circuit, there are always a great quantity of staves with cross pieces like a .....[1] or cripple's crutch, and each one takes his staff and leans upon it as long as he is at the offices of the church. In the churches there are many effigies painted on the walls. Effigies of [532] our Lord and our Lady, and of the apostles and patriarchs, and prophets and angels, and in all the churches St. George. They have not got solid images. There are many books in [212] the churches all written on parchment, because there is no [191] paper there, and the writing and language is Tigray,[2] which is that of the first country in which Christianity began.

In this country they are not accustomed to write to one another, neither do the officers of justice write anything. All the justice that is done, and what is ordered, is by messengers and speech. I say only that I saw the property of Prester John written down on being delivered up and received.

554 There would be much fruit and much more tillage in the country, if the great men did not ill treat the people, for

[1] *Taku.* [2] *Tigia.*

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they take what they have, and they do not choose to provide more than what they require and is necessary for them. 554

In no part that he went about in were there butchers' shops, except at the Court, and no person of the common people may kill a cow (even though it is his own) without leave from the lord of the country. 253

The people speak the truth little, even when they make oath, unless they swear by the head of the King. They much fear excommunication, and if they are ordered to do something, and that it be to their prejudice, they do it from fear of excommunication. 695 [688]

The oath is administered in this manner. They go to the door of the church with two priests, and they have there incense and embers, and he who has to swear puts his hands upon the church door, and one the priests tells him of the oath to speak the truth, and that if he speaks falsely, that as the lion swallows his prey in the woods, so may his soul be swallowed by the devil; and as the wheat is broken between the stones, so may his bones be ground by the devils; and he who swears, at each thing answers Amen; and as the fire burns wood, so may your soul be burned in the fire of hell and made dust. He says Amen. And this if you do not speak truth; he says Amen. And if you speak truth, may your life be prolonged with honour, and your soul in paradise with the blest. He says Amen. And this ended, he gives his testimony.

He says that the movable feasts, Easter, Ascension, Pentecost, are celebrated on the same days and seasons that we celebrate them. The birth of Christ, Circumcision, Epiphany, and other feasts of saints also agree with us, and others not. The year and months begin on the 29th day of August, on which was the beheading of St. John, and the year is of twelve months, and the month of thirty days. When the year is ended, there are five days over, which they call pagomen, which means fulfilment of the year, and in the bissextile year there are six days over; so they keep with us. 796 805

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784 He says that during all Passion week they are dressed in black or blue, and do not speak to one another for grief, saying that Judas by a kiss of peace betrayed his Lord.

532 784 Although there are in the churches effigies painted on all the walls, and also crosses, nevertheless on no cross is a crucifix painted, neither have they any of solid carving; because they say they are not deserving to see Christ crucified.

792 778 All the priests, friars, and gentlemen carry crosses in their hands, both on foot and on horseback; and the laymen of the people and lower people carry crosses round their necks. Every priest and friar carries a little horn of copper with holy water, and the hosts where they arrive beg of them water and a blessing, and they give it. Before they eat they throw drops of water on the food, and also in the drinking vases.

411 Their arms are assagays, few swords, a few shirts of mail, long and narrow; our Portuguese say that they are not of good mail.

There are many bows and arrows, they have no feathers like ours; there are very few helmets and casques. Those that there are have come since they have had intercourse with the Portuguese. There are plenty of strong bucklers;

713 there are no cannon, except two swivel guns which we brought them. At our departure there were fourteen muskets at Court, which they bought from the Turks who come there to trade. The Prester ordered whatever they asked to be given for them, and ordered men to be taught to shoot.

534 There are trumpets, but not good ones; there are many drums of copper which come from Cairo, and others of wood which have leather on both sides; there are tambourines like ours, and large cymbals which they sound. There are flutes and some instruments with chords, square like harps, which they call David moçanquo, which means the harp of David. They play these to the Prester, and not well.

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In this country there are in some parts very flat lands, and 133
in others mountainous; and altogether they are fruitful lands. There are no snowy ranges, but withal severe frosts, especially in the flat lands. In all the lands there is great [231]
breeding of cattle.

He says that he did not see the river Nile, and he reached to two days' journey from it, and the days' journey which they went were small ones, namely, four or five leagues, a little more or less. But some of those in his company reached its source, and they say that it rises in the Kingdom of Gojame, and its source is in great lakes, and where it rises there are islands, and thence it commences its course and goes to Egypt.

The time when the Nile rises in Egypt is (as they say) from the 15th day of September and later, and in all October; and the reason of this is, because the winter of Ethiopia begins from the middle of June to the middle of September, and on account of the great rains which take place in it without this winter ever changing, the Nile overflows in Egypt at that time.

It is the general custom of Prester John and all the peo- 492
ple for no man on horseback to pass a church, but before 576
they reach it they dismount, and so pass it, and lead their beasts by the bridles, and after passing they mount.

When Prester John and all his people travel, the altar and 484
the altar stone on which mass is said, all goes on the shoulders of the priests as on a litter, and there go eight priests with each altar by turns, that is, four and four: and a priest goes in front of them with a thurible, and further in front a zagonay ringing a bell, and all the people go away from the road, and those that are on horses dismount, and show reverence to the altar stone or altar.

There is no grape wine there, more than in two houses, 273
where it is made publicly, namely, in the house of Prester John and the house of the Patriarch Abima Marcos; and if

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273 any other is made, it is secretly. The wine with which mass is said in all the churches and monasteries is made in this manner. They take raisins which they have stored in the sacristies and they put them to soak in water for ten days, and they swell, and they let them dry, and they crush them and press them in a cloth, and with that wine which comes out they say mass.[1]

231 The horses, natives of the country of Prester John, are many and not good, for they are like Gallician beasts; those which come from Arabia are very good, like Moorish horses; those from Egypt are much better, very tall and big and handsome. Many lords breed horses from the mares they get from Egypt in their stables. In this manner, namely, when they are born, they do not suck the mother more than three days, and they at once put the mares to the horses[2]; and they tie up the little colts somewhat apart from the mothers, and they keep for them many milch cows, and give them their milk to drink.

DEO GRATIAS.

[1] The Malabar Christians had the same custom. See Duarte Barbosa.—
[2] *As mais acavalanas logo.*

[pp. 413-416 have not been processed for the files.- Analyst]